

# NORTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



## AS I SEE IT

### **Invest in What Works: New Research Shows More at Four Reduces Achievement Gap**

*November 4, 2010*

Since 2002, North Carolina's More at Four academic pre-kindergarten program has enabled nearly 160,000 at-risk four-year-olds to enter our public schools better prepared to learn and succeed. During these past nine years, the program also has consistently earned national recognition for its early learning standards, teacher quality and evaluation components from the National Institute for Early Education Research.

Because the Frank Porter Graham (FPG) Child Development Institute at UNC-Chapel Hill has conducted rigorous, independent evaluations of More at Four since its inception, we have solid evidence that the program works. Annual studies have shown that children served by More at Four exhibit substantial growth in key areas including language, literacy, math and social skills. And thanks to the most recent FPG research, we now also have proof that More at Four has a lasting positive effect on student learning, all the way through the third grade.

Results of this recent evaluation were presented to the State Board of Education this month and are simple and compelling. The final FPG report shows that economically-disadvantaged children in third grade who attended More at Four four years ago performed significantly better on end-of-grade reading and math tests than economically-disadvantaged children who did not attend More at Four. Therefore, we know without a doubt that More at Four provides at-risk students the solid foundation of skills that help them succeed in school well-beyond kindergarten.

When you think of the results in terms of closing the achievement gap between economically-disadvantaged and middle-class students, the findings are even more significant. Depending on the test and the year, the study found that the gap between average test scores among economically-disadvantaged students who attended More and Four and middle-class students who did not attend More at Four decreased by between 25 and 40 percent. Such results make it clear that More at Four helps to level the academic playing field among all students.

The nearly 30 years I have spent in public education have taught me that program evaluation results like the ones found in this recent More at Four report are hard to come by. Every day we see a new strategy introduced to help reduce the achievement gap and dropout rate. Many of these ideas are can be promising, but nothing is more valuable than a program with a proven record. More at Four is one of these programs. I hope state leaders will continue to recognize this and commit to continued investment in what works as these are the investments that truly pay off for our students and state for years to come.

Bill Harrison, Chairman  
State Board of Education